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## **FOREIGN NATIONAL SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS IN PRISON FOR SMUGGLING EAST AFRICANS TO THE UNITED STATES**

WASHINGTON – A Ghanaian man was sentenced today in the District of Columbia for his role in smuggling East Africans into the United States, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Rita M. Glavin, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeffrey A. Taylor and Acting Assistant Secretary of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) John Torres announced.

Mohammed Kamel Ibrahim, a/k/a Hakim, 27, a native of Ghana and naturalized citizen of Mexico, was sentenced to five years in prison by U.S. District Judge Ricardo M. Urbina after pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy and three counts of bringing aliens to the United States for profit.

According to his plea, Ibrahim operated an alien-smuggling organization in Mexico City that moved unauthorized aliens from East Africa across the southern U.S. border beginning as early as 2005. In plea documents Ibrahim admitted that between June 2006 and February 2007 he and co-defendant Sampson Lovelace Boateng conspired to smuggle unauthorized aliens to the United States by providing the aliens with fraudulently obtained Mexican visas. The visas, which Boateng obtained through a corrupt employee of the Mexican embassy in Belize, enabled East African aliens to travel into Mexico, then be smuggled across the southern U.S. border by Ibrahim's Mexico City-based organization. According to the plea documents, Ibrahim's organization smuggled the aliens by various means, including by concealing them for more than 12 hours in the sleeper compartments of commercial buses. In pleading guilty, Ibrahim admitted to smuggling between 25 and 99 aliens into the United States.

Ibrahim and Boateng were charged in a 28-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia on Oct. 31, 2007, and unsealed on Dec. 5, 2007. Ibrahim was arrested by Mexican authorities in Mexico City on Dec. 5, 2007, and extradited to the United States on April 24, 2008. Boateng was arrested at Miami International Airport on Nov. 5, 2007, after arriving on a commercial airline flight from Belize. Boateng pleaded guilty to conspiracy and alien-smuggling charges in the District of Columbia on April 22, 2008, and Ibrahim pleaded guilty on Sept. 22, 2008.

Boateng's sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 10, 2009. Both men will be removed from the United States upon completion of their sentences.

The case was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Brian Rogers of the Criminal Division's Domestic Security Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jay Bratt, Colleen Covell and Michael Harvey of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. Valuable assistance was provided by Trial Attorney Mary Ann Snow and Paralegal Rachel Estabrook of the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs.

The investigation was conducted by ICE's Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., offices, with assistance from the ICE attaché in Mexico City, the ICE attaché in Guatemala City, the Diplomatic Security Office of the U.S. Embassy in Belize and the Drug Enforcement Administration attaché in Belize. Valuable support was provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the ICE Forensic Document Laboratory. Mexican and Belizean authorities also provided substantial support to the investigation.

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